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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BN](#)
SUBJECT: CENA RELEASES MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS RESULTS

REF: COTONOU 281 AND PREVIOUS

1. (U) SUMMARY: On May 20, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENA) published the results of the April 20 municipal and local elections after it failed to do so on May 6 (the date it previously promised to do so). The results indicate that President Yayi's political coalition Force Cowry for an Emerging Benin (FCBE) has taken control of 36 communes out of 77, followed by the G13, a group led by 13 National Assembly deputies that split from President Yayi in February, with 9 communes. The 4 political parties referred to as the G4, the Renaissance of Benin (RB), the Party of Democratic Renewal (PRD), the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the African Movement for Democracy and Progress (MADEP) maintained control over their individual strongholds. The results sparked protests in some parts of the country pending the Supreme Court's rulings regarding the numerous appeals filed by candidates who accused the CENA of manipulating the vote. END SUMMARY.

FCBE asserts itself as political
force...

2.(U) According to the official results released by the CENA, the pro-Yayi FCBE took the lead by obtaining 701 municipal posts nationwide out of 1435, thus grasping the majority of seats in 36 out of 77 communes. The G13 followed with 189 municipal seats and is likely to control 9 communes. The Party of Democratic Renewal (PRD), the Renaissance du Benin Party (RB), the Social Democratic Party in coalition with the Alliance for Dynamism and Democracy Party (ADD-PSD), and the African Movement for Democracy and Progress in coalition with the Alliance for Dynamism and Democracy Party (ADD-MADEP) have grasped respectively six, four, five and two communes. One surprise was the performance of the Key Force party (Force Cle) which secured the majority in 3 communes, Toffo, Ouenhi and Zogbodomey in southern and central Benin. Key Force is linked to Lazare Sehoueto, a former minister of agriculture in former President Kerekou's government.

... But lost in major city halls

3. (U) The FCBE did not succeed in capturing major city halls including Cotonou, Porto-Novo, Abomey, Bohicon and Lokossa, in southern and central Benin, and Natitingou and Malanville in northern Benin. The exceptions were the two large northern cities of Parakou and Djougou which remain under FCBE control. Though the traditional political parties confirmed their superiority in their respective strongholds, FCBE achieved a breakthrough in those areas by securing some of the councilors seats. However, FCBE's failure in grasping the city halls of Cotonou, the economic capital and Porto-Novo, the administrative capital, is a blow to President Yayi.

Poll results spark protests

14. (SBU) Immediately after the CENA officially announced the final results, FCBE supporters launched violent protests in Seme Kpodji and Avrankou, two cities located in southeastern Benin, against the results. They accused the CENA of allegedly rigging the poll results to favor PRD candidates and threatened to prevent the inauguration of the future mayor from taking place. A source from the Permanent Secretariat of the CENA (SAP-CENA) told post that the CENA, encouraged by its president, Pascal Tadjinou, cancelled many votes for FCBE candidates during its official tabulation of the results. According to the same source these cancellations favored PRD candidates. While the law says that mayors should be elected and inaugurated 15 days after the announcement of the final results, the Supreme Court is trying to look into hundreds of appeals filed by losing candidates. The Supreme Court will verify if the vote counting was accurate and determine if the candidate has a legitimate reason to challenge the election.

5.(SBU) COMMENT: President Yayi's FCBE appears as the most powerful political force in Benin especially in rural areas and the north. It will continue to be difficult for him to govern on the national level without cooperating with the political parties which opposed him in the municipal elections and did well in the major cities. A strong coalition between the G4, the G13 and the Key Force party in the National Assembly, and in the 2011 presidential elections, could cause him significant difficulties as he attempts to continue pushing his agenda through the National Assembly. With the official results announced we expect a cabinet reshuffle in the near future in an attempt by President Yayi to bring members of the G4 and G13

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into his government in an attempt to forestall the formation of a cohesive opposition. END COMMENT.

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